

Chicago Criminal Courts Building  
(Chicago Board of Health Building)  
54 West Hubbard Street  
northwest corner of West Hubbard  
and North Dearborn Streets  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1036

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIC,  
38-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Washington Planning and Service Center  
1730 North Lynn Street  
Arlington, Virginia

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ILL-1036

CHICAGO CRIMINAL COURTS BUILDING  
(CHICAGO BOARD OF HEALTH BUILDING)HABS  
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38-

Location: 54 West Hubbard Street; northwest corner of West Hubbard and North Dearborn Streets; Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: City of Chicago.

Present Use: Office for Board of Health.

Statement of Significance: This building of 1892 is one of the last works of a lesser-known, early Chicago architect, Otto H. Matz. Its blocklike form and heavily rusticated exterior recall something of the Richardsonian tradition of the early 1880's.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lots 10-26 in Block 7 of John S. Prussing's Subdivision of Blocks 7 and 10 in Wolcott's Addition to Chicago. Recorded November 2, 1848. Anti-Fire.

The following is taken from the complete chain of title contained in Book 457, p. 160, in the Cook County Recorder's Office: The land was purchased by Cook County in 1872 in three transactions: lots 10-13 and 23-26, from E. Kellogg Beach, wife et al., and the City of Chicago (Documents 47696-7, August 6, 1872); Lots 16-17, from Charles H. Chapin and wife (Document 55923, September 13, 1872); and wife et al. (Document 55924, September 13, 1872). The land was retained by the County until it was turned over to the City of Chicago by ordinance on February 11, 1926 (Document 9177610: "Exchanging certain property in east half south-west quarter Section 25-39-13 for House of Correction, for certain other property occupied as County Jail and designated as lots 14-22 . . ."). The City of Chicago is the present owner as of the last entry, dated February 13, 1926 (Document 9178705).

2. Date of erection: 1892; "1893" is inscribed in the book held by the sculpted figure in the left spandrel of entrance arch.

3. Architect: Otto H. Matz (b. 1830 - d. March 18, 1919, Chicago).

Vita: Born Berlin, 1830; 1853 joined Illinois Central Engineer Corps, later became architect of road; prepared plans and supervised building of depot on S. Water St.; 1857 opened independent office in Chicago; 1861-64 assistant engineer U.S. Army; 1864 resumed work in Chicago; 1868 appointed architect of Chicago public schools; first prize for post-fire competition for Chicago Court House and City Hall; other buildings include Nixon Building (1864), Alexian Brothers Hospital, and Chicago Hospital for Women and Children. /Based on A. T. Andreas, History of Chicago, Vol. 2 (Chicago: The A. T. Andreas Company, Publishers, 1886), p. 565, and Thomas E. Tallmadge, Architecture in Old Chicago (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 97/.

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: There is no record of the original Building Permit.

The literature on this building is practically negligible. Randall describes it only as "...6 stories, with one basement on spread foundations." (p. 133).

5. Notes on alterations and additions: The jail portion of the original criminal courts building was demolished in 1936. /Frank A. Randall, History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949), p. 133/.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with Building:

"This site was occupied formerly by North Market Hall, which was built in 1851. The first Criminal Court and County Jail Building on this site (illustrated in Orear, Commercial and Architectural Chicago, 1887, p. 21) was completed in 1874, with Armstrong and Egan as architects. The Court House fronted 140' on W. Hubbard Street and 65' on N. Dearborn Street; the Jail fronted 141' on W. Illinois Street. The former was three stories high; the latter, two stories . . . This building was torn down in 1892 to make way for the present building." /Ibid./.

C. Bibliography:

Andreas, A. T. History of Chicago. Vol. 2. Chicago: The A. T. Andreas Company, Publishers, 1886. Pp. 565, 611; Vol. 3, p. 241.

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Information on Matz.

Inland Architect 21 (March, 1893). Pl. fol. p. 30.

Matz, Otto Hermann (1830-1919), biographical notes filed in the  
pamphlet file of the Burnham Library in the Art Institute  
of Chicago.

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Construction in Chicago. Urbana: The University of Illinois  
Press, 1949. P. 133.  
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Tallmadge, Thomas E. Architecture in Old Chicago. Chicago:  
The University of Chicago Press, 1949. P. 97, 125.  
Information on Matz.

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National Park Service  
William J. Rudd  
Supervisory Architect  
National Park Service  
October, 1964

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An excellent example of rusticated masonry in a multi-story Chicago building.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Number of stories: Six plus basement.
2. Layout-shape: Rectangular
3. Foundations: Limestone walls showing above grade.

4. Wall construction, finish and color: Light grey rock-faced limestone with split-face on east, south and west walls. Limestone string course at sills of second and fifth floors. Very dark red common brick on north wall.
  5. Structural system, framing: Masonry bearing wall.
  6. Chimneys: One chimney on north (rear) wall, near northeast corner, projects beyond face of wall.
  7. Openings:
    - a. Doorways and doors: Large limestone entrance arch in center of south facade. (Doors are not original).
    - b. Windows: Double-hung.
  8. Roof:
    - a. Shape, covering: Flat, built-up.
    - b. Cornice, eaves: Shallow limestone cornice on limestone brackets.
    - c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: Central entrance bay projects above cornice line of building. Small rounded corner detail of limestone from fifth floor sill to roof. Corbel table at fifth floor sill; small rounded corner details from here beyond cornice and main roof.
- C. Description of Interior:
1. Floor plans:
    - a. Basement: Storage, offices and mechanical equipment.
    - b. Floors 1 to 6: Offices of Department of Board of Health.
  2. Stairways: One stairway in rear center of building wraps around the elevator shaft. A wide stairway leads from the grade entrance to the first floor level.
  3. Flooring: Linoleum in offices. White hexagonal ceramic tile in corridors and lobby.
  4. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted plaster with marble wainscot.
  5. Doorways and doors: Dark stained walnut doors and frames. Doors have five recessed panels - one is horizontal in

center of door with two vertical panels above and two vertical panels below the horizontal panel. Some doors have a single pane of glass in place of the two upper vertical panels.

6. Lighting: Electrical.

7. Heating: Central.

D. Site:

1. General orientation and setting: The building faces south on the northwest corner of Hubbard and Dearborn Streets, two blocks north of the Chicago River.
2. Outbuildings: An old jail adjacent to the building on the north has been razed.

Prepared by J. William Rudd  
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National Park Service  
September, 1964